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Housekeepers' Chat Monday, December 23, 1929

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "A Christmas Pudding." From Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes."

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This morning, while I was thinking about roast turkey dinners, and what a lot of work it is to prepare holiday meals, I was reminded of the big feasts which were served in the days of old, when knights and lords and ladies lived in merrie England.

Do you know that they used to celebrate Christmas for two weeks, or more? The biggest feast of all came on Christmas day, when the feudal chieftain entertained all his friends. The boar's head was the main dish on the menu. All the "best people" served a boar's head at Christmas time. It was always carried to the banqueting hall on a gold or silver platter, by a special servant, amid the flourish of trumpets, and strains of minstrelsy.

Next in importance to the boar's head was a peacock. The skin and feathers were first carefully removed, and the peacock was roasted. When it was done, the bird was sewed up again in all its gorgeous plumage, its beak was gilded, and it was sent to the table.

Only noble hands could serve this splendid dish. It was brought into the dining hall by the most distinguished and beautiful lady guest. She was followed by the rest of the ladies, and they entered the hall to the sounds of music.

The dish was placed before the master of the house, or his most honored guest, who, no doubt, was as skillful with the carving knife, as he was with the lance, in joust or tournament.

Which reminds me that I must get my carving knife sharpened, before Christmas day. Uncle Ebenezer says he doesn't mind carving, if he has a sharp knife, and a platter large enough to hold all the turkey, when it is carved.

This morning, I am going to answer a letter from a young bride, who wants help on planning her Christmas dinner, setting the table, and so forth. "I haven't been married very long," she writes, "and this is the first big dinner I've prepared all by myself. I want it to be a success, since my husband's parents and his older sister are to be my guests."

Well, well, of course she wants it to be a success. There's a lot at stake when one's husband's folks come to visit for the first time.

Let's begin with the table. It must be immaculate. "His" mother is a wonderful housekeeper, and she notices everything.

First, we'll lay the silence cloth, which is made of felt, or a cotton material. A silence cloth prevents noise, protects the table, and improves the appearance of the table cloth. Many housewives nowadays use absestos pads, which fit the top of the table, under the silence cloth. Asbestos pads are an ideal protection from hot dishes.

Use your very best linen tablecloth. Unfold it carefully, on the table, to avoid creases and wrinkles. Can't have a wrinkled tablecloth, on Christmas day. Place the cloth on the table so the center lengthwise fold comes exactly in the middle of the table. The four corners should be an equal distance from the floor.

You will want a pretty decoration for the table. I suggest a low bowl of fruit, as a centerpiece. If you have a silver or pewter bowl among your wedding gifts, now is the time to bring it forth. Or you might use a glass or china bowl, or a basket. Pick out the choicest fruits — apples, bananas, oranges, grapes, or other fruits — so that the centerpiece is a mass of bright colors. If the bowl or basket is not very decorative in itself, you might put a wreath or garland of evergreen on the tablecloth around the bowl, several inches from it. This bank of green will set off the bright-colored fruit. Keep the wreath in a cool place, after Christmas, and it may be used again for New Year's.

Perhaps you will serve your Christmas dinner in the late afternoon, or in the evening. In that case, group four candles, in silver or glass candlesticks, around the fruit centerpiece. Red, orange, or white candles are pretty. Place your candles so they will look well with the shape of the table, and be sure they are spaced evenly.

Now we're ready to set the table. Let's use the wedding china, glassware, and silver. I can't figure out what some of these odd pieces of wedding silver are to be used for! Can you? Maybe they're just "wedding presents." What's that queer-shaped piece of silver? Oh, his mother gave it to you. Well, you'd better use it. No, I don't know what it's for. Put it in the gravy, or the jelly.

Last week I broadcast two Christmas menus, so we won't talk about menus today.

Do you remember the Cranberry pudding, with Cranberry Sauce, that I gave you once upon a time? There have been so many requests lately for this recipe, that I am going to broadcast it again this morning. This is an inexpensive dessert, and delicious enough for the Christmas dinner, provided you don't care for Plum Pudding, or Mince Pie.

I'll give you first the recipe for the Cranberry Pudding, and then the recipe for the Cranberry Sauce.

Eight ingredients, for the Cranberry Pudding:

1/3 cup butter
1/2 cup sugar
1 egg.
2-1/4 cups flour
3-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup milk, and
1 cup raw cranberries, or more.

eight ingredients — let's check them: (Repeat ingredients).

Cream the butter and sugar. Add the well-beaten egg. Mix and sift the dry ingredients (saving about 2 tablespoons flour for the cranberries). Add the dry ingredients, alternately, to the first mixture and the milk. Roll the cranberries in flour, and add them last. Turn into a buttered mold, cover, and steam for two hours. After the pudding has steamed, it may be placed in the oven to brown, if desired.

Here's the sauce, to serve on the pudding. Seven ingredients in the sauce:

1 cup sugar
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups boiling water
2 cups cranberries
1 cup water, and
2 to 4 tablespoons butter

Seven ingredients, for the Cranberry Sauce: (Repeat ingredients).

The two cups of cranberries and the one cup of water should make one and one-half cups of cranberry pulp.

Mix the sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Add the 2 cups of boiling water, stir until thickened, and cook for 10 minutes in a double boiler. Cook the cranberries with 1 cup of water until soft. Press them through a fine sieve, and add this pulp to the cornstarch mixture. Add the butter, and serve hot, over the hot cranberry pudding.

Tuesday: "A Last-Minute Gift from the Kitchen."